

Ring out the old, ring in the new



The focus of so much of our attention in 1992 seems to have been the new products launched so successfully in the summer (or, to some of us, the winter, as I can testify as I recall an evening in Christchurch in the

South Island of New Zealand where the weather was as wet and cold as anything I have seen in the UK this year; however, the welcome from an intrepid gathering of Acorn users was as friendly and warming as any I

NEWS LETTER

have ever encountered – definitely a highlight of my year).

The first half of the year saw our development teams, product engineers, procurement staff and product marketers totally engrossed in getting the new products ready, while from launch the production, marketing and sales teams have taken on the baton.

Together we have achieved great things for Acorn with these new products.

But this does not tell the whole story for Acorn this year. A first half of significantly increased revenue and profits was fuelled by successful sales of the previous generation of products; there are exciting new developments attracting a great deal of positive rumour-mongering as snippets leak out: in both Australia and New Zealand we have achieved a significant increase in our profile and much improved financial results; and as all of this was being concocted, our 'backroom staff' in all the administrative and support functions of the Group have done a marvellous job for us in making it happen.

In all, a year of very many

highlights, in economic conditions in all our countries which leave much to be desired.

For all of this, I would like to thank you for your skills and efforts and enthusiasm and sense of fun – this last in particular tested to its limits at times, but I am glad to say still evident in all we do.

What of 1993? Our recessions are rumoured to have bottomed out, we have a superb range of technologies and products at our disposal, we have a strategy to exploit them which I will be sharing with all of you over the next few weeks, and most of all we have a great team of people. I do not believe it will be easy, it will require hard work and planning; but unlike many other companies in our industry, we offer something different and better and we have reasons to succeed.

I look forward to working with you all in achieving these successes, but before that I wish all of you and your families a very happy Christmas and enjoyable New Year, and a well-deserved break!

Sam Wauchope

Sam

What are 'Acorn in Education Centres'?

By the time you read this, we estimate there will be around 40 Acorn in Education Centres located throughout the UK. So what are these centres, and what services do they provide?

Before the government decided that individual schools should be responsible for their own budgets, local authorities funded establishments known as Teacher Centres. These centres provided expensive central resources such as video, printing and photocopying equipment as well as information and advice on IT and other specialist areas.

Now that education budgets

are devolved to individual schools, local authorities have less money to spend and teacher centres have been told that if they want to survive, they have to be self-financing. Earlier this year we were approached by a handful of influential teacher centres, asking for our support.

Before their visit, we were already anxious about the potential decline of these centres. Clearly, promoting our products to thousands of individual schools was going to be much more difficult and time-consuming than dealing with 140 teacher centres.

After much consideration we decided to offer support to as many teacher centres as were able to meet particular criteria. Provided they could offer schools a set level of service, we would brand them as Acorn in Education Centres and help them in a number of ways.

Acorn's assistance includes nationwide advertising, publication of brochures, supply of display stands, hotline technical support, free loan of new products, discounts for products used in the centre, special presentations at Acorn and training in topics such as finance, sales and

marketing to help them make the transition to self-financing organisations.

Services provided by Acorn in Education Centres vary, but could include in-school support and training, software library, demonstration machines, experienced teaching staff, WP, DTP and database resources, network support, workshops, digitising, colour scanning and colour printing, curriculum support materials, advice on special needs, and assistance in a wide range of other areas. ■

The Home Computer Show

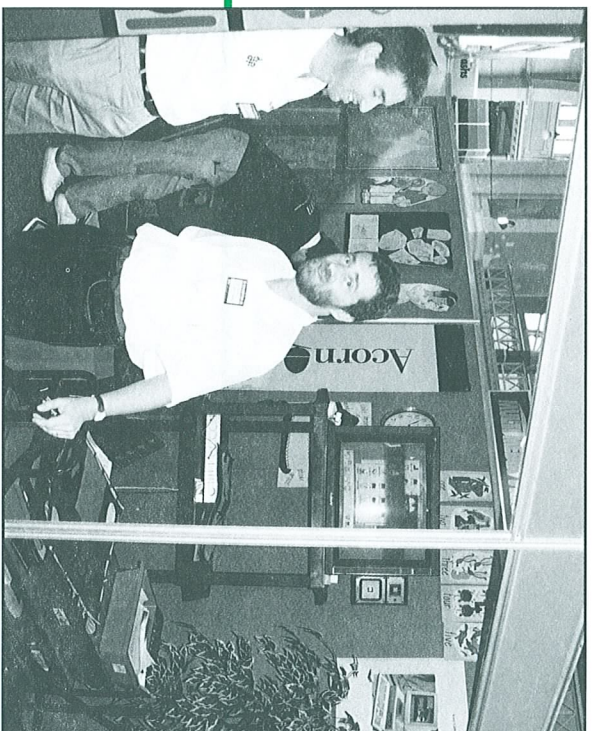
13-15 November 1992

Acorn's Australian staff spent a busy and tiring weekend at the first 'Home Computer Show'. The exhibition was the first to actively encourage children to attend, and our focus on education and increasing profile in Melbourne's schools helped to differentiate us from the mainly DOS vendors who also exhibited their offerings to the home market.

We set up the Acorn Classroom which was run by our

Education Team of Peter Revell, Laurence Hardwick, Carol Cartwright, Ian Dawes and Glenda Graham. Many parents were intrigued by the type of learning activities which could be facilitated when using our computers with a range of educational software.

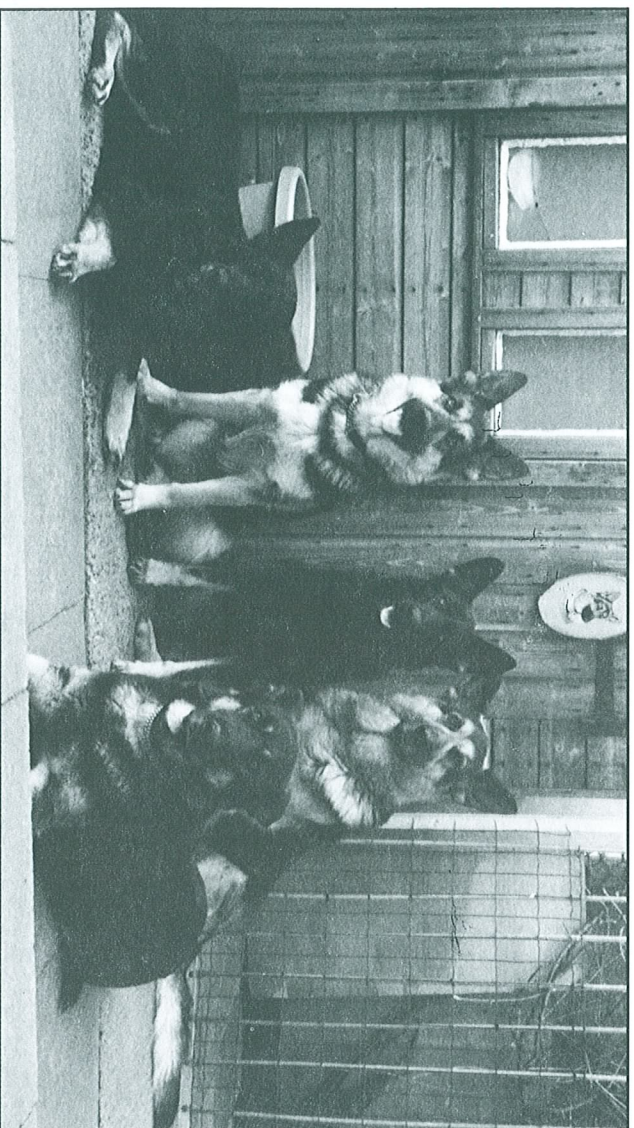
Over 35,000 people attended during 13-15 November and the response from the home user confirms our intention to further our discussions with potential



outlets for the consumer-orientated A3010. Until now we have concentrated our efforts on consolidating our position in the schools market. A series of launch events over the last month have exposed the new offerings from Acorn to a wide

audience of interested school purchasers. The British link has been exploited as well with events staged in the Melbourne, Sydney and Perth offices and residences of the British Consulate-General. ■

Sales closed with psalms!



... and the occasional strong-arm tactic! Mike's family of German Shepherd dogs

Catch the early flight on Monday morning for a sales meeting in Birmingham. Fly back and make a quick call in Edinburgh on Tuesday morning before driving on to customers in Glasgow and Carlisle. Book into a hotel and spend the following day making calls in Newcastle. Travel up to Inverness and back on Thursday. Early flight to Belfast on Friday, then back home to Edinburgh for an exhibition in Glasgow on Saturday. It's all in a week's work for area sales manager Mike Friedman.

Covering the whole of Scotland, Northern Ireland and Northern England, Mike travels

around 50,000 miles a year by car and another 2,000 air miles a month. 'I get to see some magnificent scenery', says Mike. Sometimes, when I'm driving through somewhere like North Buckie, near Inverness, I think to myself, 'People pay to travel through country like this, and here I am, being paid to be here!'

Mike's particularly fond of the mountains and river valleys around Grantown-on-Spey, home of some of Scotland's finest malt whiskies - 'but I'm not a whisky drinker', he adds!

Diversity of countryside is just

one of the attractions of Mike's job. He also gets to meet a wide range of different people. 'During one call I might be talking to a committed Christian, who has a Bible on his desk and is fond of quoting psalms, and on the next I might be chatting to someone with a burning passion for vintage cars who can't wait to finish our business so we can both go to see his splendid motor. It's fun meeting so many different characters.'

'One of the things some people in Cambridge don't realise is that Scotland and Northern Ireland don't have the English National Curriculum, so

they have different needs. Fortunately, Acorn fulfils these needs better than any of our competitors.'

'It's not all about making sales. You have to build relationships with different people. You've somehow got to convince people who run their own businesses to do things differently - such as stock more products, do more demonstrations, stop undercutting other dealers, and so on.'

Mike is married with two children: Christopher is 21 and is at university, Sarah-Jane is 17. He likes to go skiing in Scotland about twice a year, and enjoys riding with his wife who owns a couple of horses. The Friedmans also have three Shepherd dogs which they used to show and enter in working trials. One of Mike's more unusual pastimes is collecting and eating mushrooms from the forest behind his house. (That explains it!)

Mike's been working with Acorn for nearly four years; however, he might have had some inkling of his future career when he was only three years old! At that time his Canadian parents moved to Italy where his father spent 10 years with Olivetti working on early computers. ■



Meet our newest working mother

It's not easy being a working mother but Sue Kelly has got everything well organised.

Sue wakes baby Claire at 6.30, then leaves for granny's house at 7.30. She spends about half an hour playing with Claire before leaving her in granny's capable hands while she's at work. At the end of the day, Sue picks up Claire at 6.00 and gets home around 6.30.



'Claire was born on 17 July, and I've been back at work since 5 September', remembers Sue. 'It was very upsetting leaving Claire at first, but I know she is happy and well looked after at Mum's, so that makes things a bit easier. Sometimes I worry that I'm missing out by not being with Claire all the time. But, on the other hand, when I was at home during my mater-

nity leave I felt very lonely and isolated at times. It's nice to be back in the thick of things at Acorn.'

Acorn for nearly three years. 'It's not easy, but I'm lucky that my mum can help, and I get lots of support from my husband who helps with cooking and in other ways. Claire helps too, by sleeping through the night!'

When I see an elephant fly

You all know the Disney tale of the large-eared elephant who took to the skies. One of our newest arrivals at Acorn achieved a similar feat when he arranged for an elephant-shaped hot-air balloon to come with others to provide entertainment at the Jumbo Safari Party. This event was organised by Richard Percy, our Sales and Marketing Manager, Consumer, who is a founder member of Elefriends. Virgin Studios was the venue and Richard Branson supplied three of his own balloons as well as a number of air tickets.

Apart from an interest in wildlife and endangered species, Richard is keen on all kinds of sport. At his old school, he won the mile and the half-mile, coxed the winning eight and was captain of one of the junior football teams. Nowadays he only has time for tennis and the occasional skiing holiday.

Born in Zimbabwe, Richard decided to return to Africa after spending a year out travelling across the USA. He read Economics at the University of Cape Town and graduated with a Bachelors degree.

Before joining Acorn, Richard gained considerable experience in sales and marketing roles in telecomms and high-tech consumer electronics. In his new post, one of his main tasks will be to raise the profile of Acorn so ensuring that both parents and children understand that home computers are much more than mere games consoles.

Richard is married to Deborah and has two girls, Natasha (4) and Sabrina (2).

Electronic publishing on show in Holland and Belgium

In the last issue of Acorn Newsletter, we reported that A B Dick in Holland had agreed to sell a pre-press system based on Acorn computers. During the first week in September, both our companies shared an impressive stand at an important exhibition in Utrecht. The stand was large enough to incorporate a complete printing press plus a large amount of other associated equipment.

Encouraged by our success with A B Dick in Holland, we have opened discussions with A B Dick in Belgium. Two weeks after the Utrecht event, we were able to show our product on A B Dick's stand at BURO-92 in Brussels, and were

very pleased with the interest it created. During October we ran a one-day training course for A B Dick's Belgian salesforce.

Both A B Dick in Holland and its sister company in Belgium are delighted with the Acorn product. As it does everything that the competitors' products do but at less cost, they are able to sell our product *and* persuade their customers to have an even more expensive printing press!

In the near future, we hope to be able to set up a meeting with A B Dick in Germany. Although all the A B Dick companies operate autonomously, we hope that the relationship already built up in Holland and in Belgium will be to our advantage.

Every pupil to own a Pocket Book?

Since the introduction of the Acorn Pocket Book, Acorn sales teams have been working hard to establish this innovative product within schools. So far a number of LEAs have expressed considerable interest in the product, and many of them are planning to trial it in schools. In the first instance, we are likely to supply the Pocket Book in packs of 10 to be shared within a classroom. Eventually, it may be that every child has their own Pocket Book, just as they have their own calculator at present.

'One school is talking to us at

the moment about the possibility of every child in the intake year (110) having their own Pocket Book', explains Kevin Roddis.

'When I was a teacher', he remembers, 'having to give out calculators at the start of the lesson and get them all back again at the end, took up valuable teaching time. I think this is something that worries the LEAs at the moment.'

'But we're getting very positive feedback from the schools and LEAs. Although the product is a bit of a culture shock for them, they can see the benefits

Earlier in the year, we invited a number of international representatives to join us at the Acorn User show in October. Some 27 took up our invitation, together representing Holland, Germany, Belgium, France, Malta, Switzerland, Norway, Sweden, South Africa, Iceland and Canada. As well as having an opportunity to see all our new products and a wide range of third party software, they were also able to learn more about our marketing plans and strategies for the future through a series of special presentations given by Sam and others.

of being able to use a database and a spreadsheet in field work. To use the product sensibly, they know they will have to develop new courseware, but I fully expect schoolchildren will be using the Pocket Book for real early in the New Year.'

Although secondary schools are likely to be the first to take up the Pocket Book, Kevin feels that primary schools won't be far behind. 'They do lots of field trips, probably more than in secondary schools, and the teacher has the children all day, rather than for one period.'

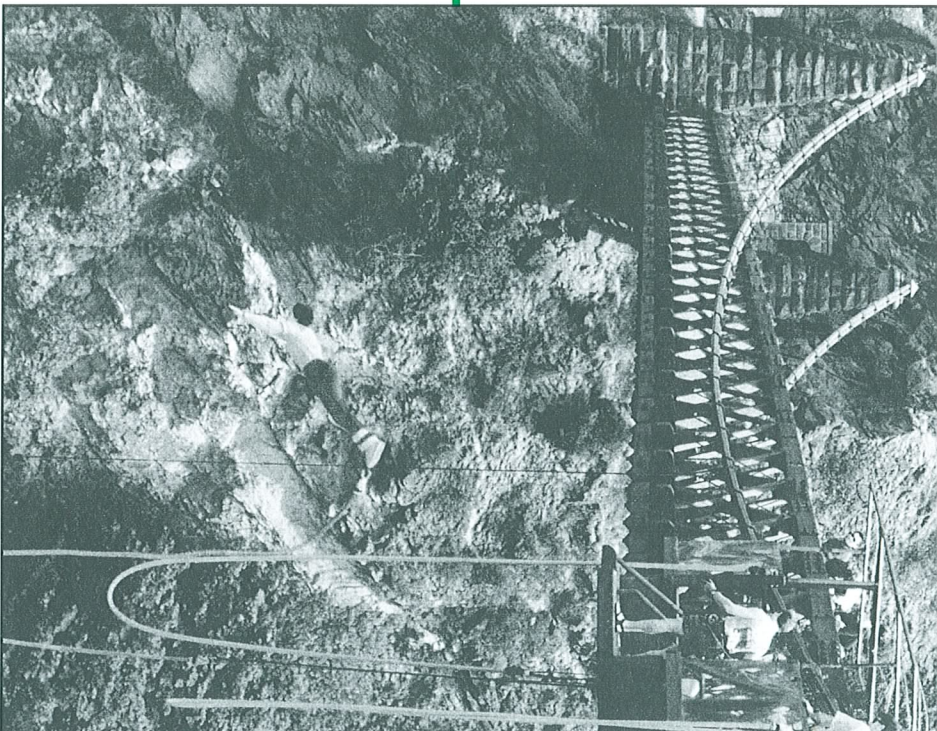
Acorn NZ receptionist takes dive!

Joanna Howley is one of those quiet people who comes in, gets on with her job, mixes with everyone well but gives off that air of 'wouldn't say boo to a mouse'. When Jo says she is on holiday you simply think of beaches, sunhats, good books, maybe the odd night on the town. Don't you believe it!

Recently Jo went off on annual leave for a jaunt around the South Island of New Zealand. One little item that she brought back was the picture shown here. Jo has just

launched herself off the Kawerau River Bridge, which is 150 feet above the river. This is New Zealand's gift to the world of thrillseekers, 'Bungy Jumping'. Rather you than me, Jo, is all I can say! I'm afraid jumping off tall places on the end of a rubber band is not my idea of holidaying!

Funny really, when I saw this picture, I couldn't resist looking to see if she had grown any! Alas, Jo, this is not the way to get taller!



COLOSSUS — the story continues...

Acorn launched an exciting range of new products earlier in the year as part of the Colossus project. How are all these products selling in the run up to Christmas? Acorn Newsletter decided to talk to Terry Shurwood, General Sales Manager.

It's a particularly difficult market at the moment with the recession hitting hard in the High Street. We're finding that MS DOS machines are being discounted very heavily in order to attract sales, but Acorn products are being offered in over a thousand High Street outlets at their full recommended selling price. Our products are also featured in 18 million Christmas catalogues. The Argos catalogue, for example, lists hundreds of different products suitable for Christmas presents. They're all discounted except for our product.

'The High Street multiples that have decided to sell our products are all majoring on the Family Solution, because of its aggressive £499 price tag. The positioning of our product is virtually unique, compared with Sega and Nintendo, which are just games machines. We're offering spectacular games, plus a powerful 32-bit computer that will take a child from infancy to university allowing him to have plenty of fun along the way. Our TV commercial is specially designed to get this message across.

Hugh Symmons has been appointed as our consumer distributor and has already established us with new High Street consumer dealers in spite of difficult market conditions. We're sending out the leads generated by our advertising campaign and tracking them through to make sure as many leads as possible get converted into sales.

The new educational machines launched as part of Colossus have been extremely well received with demand outstripping supply. The new A4000 has been particularly welcomed by secondary schools and many of our traditional junior school customers. The Home Office product has been taken up by dealers who tend to sell more Acorn products than others, such as John Lewis.

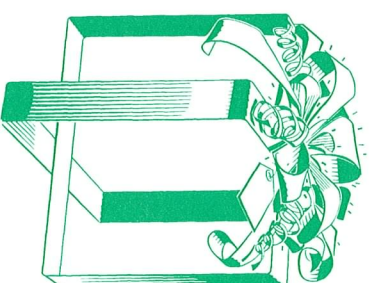
'Considered a masterpiece of engineering by those "in the know", the A4 portable has been in restricted supply and we now have an order backlog. As a result, I feel this product has yet to fulfil its full distribution potential.

'The Pocket Book, our first cooperative computer-based product, badged in partnership with Psion, looks like being highly successful. With the appropriate linking software it is possible for software and data to be transferable between the Pocket Book and any RISC-based machine using a 3.1 operating system. So

a student will be able to enter text at home or away from school, then upload it onto the school's computer for further

work in the classroom. This will be a major saving in terms of teacher time.

1992 — tailor-made training is delivered



One of the most successful courses during the year was the 'Making finance work for you' programme. About two dozen senior managers attended this course and feedback has been very positive. The first day of the course concentrated on an explanation of the terminology used in finance, the second looked at finance with particular reference to Acorn. After the

classwork there was an opportunity to meet people in our own Finance department to ask them specific questions.

The Victoria Core Team have been training in project skills such as planning, budgeting and team work. This included looking at each team's responsibilities, charting the structure of the team and identifying the contribution that individual members can make.

In October we invited Reg

Hamilton, a training and development consultant, to interview about 15 staff, representing a cross-section of Acorn people, on their views on training and development within Acorn. Using his report we will assess our training and development methods and direct our efforts towards having an even better training year in 1993.

Reflecting on this year's training, Janet Henson-Webb explained: 'We're developing a new approach to training. We're not just using off-the-shelf courses, but introducing more and more programmes dealing with specific areas of particular interest to Acorn. We're also aware that many Acorn staff are interested in obtaining vocational qualifications, and I'm delighted that so many of our staff have gained successes in OU and other courses.'

World beaters link with Acorn

During the day at the Computer Shopper Show I took the opportunity of interviewing Fatima Whitbread, the marketing consultant for the Chafford Hundred. Fatima, whose triumphs include the European Championship, the World Championship, one-time World Record Holder and the only athlete to bring back a gold medal from Rome in 1987, told me of her disappointment of having to give up the javelin after 16 years as one of the world's best female javelin throwers.

She was forced to retire before the Barcelona Olympics with a torn rotator cuff muscle. The muscle failed to respond to treatment in spite of two major operations in 1989 and 1990. Still retaining her sense of humour (you remember the famous Fatima wiggle after winning the gold medal in Rome), she said, 'My shoulder now dislocates so my arm now goes further than the javelins these days'.

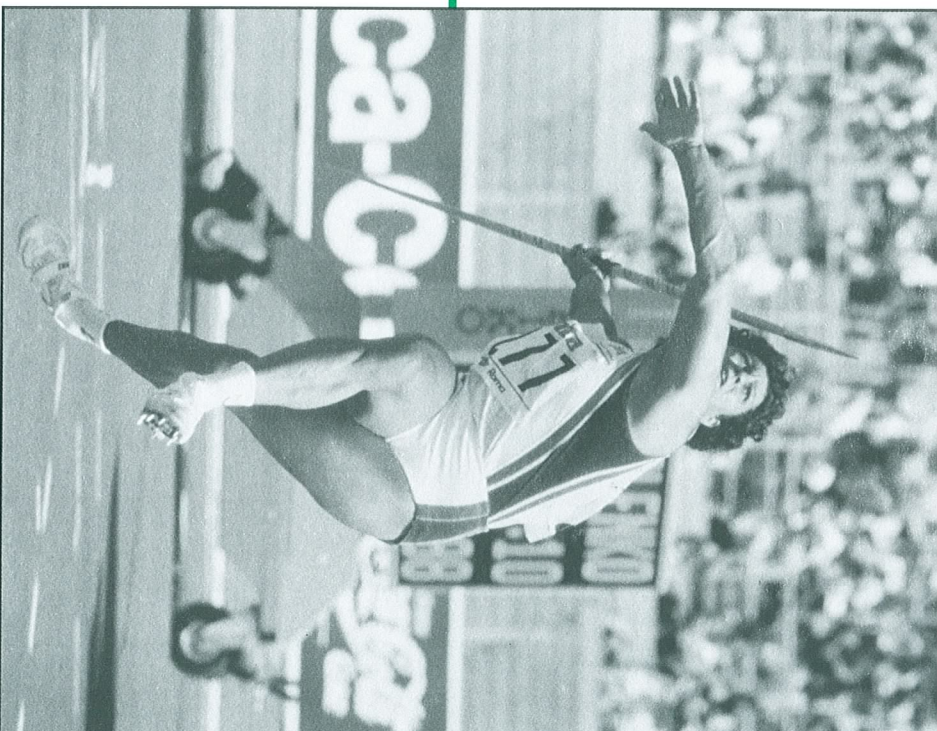
Asked how she felt about retiring from world competition

she said that she was obviously disappointed especially as she could have thrown further than the gold medalist in Barcelona. But she said that at least she has experienced the joys and excitement of world success and recounts the three eras of British athletes she had accompanied to major competitions:

1. Geoff Capes, Alan Pascoe
2. Steve Overt, Seb Coe, Dally Thomson and 'my old friend' Tessa Sanderson
3. Steve Cram, Linford Christie, Steve Backley and Colin Jackson.

Tessa was forced to look for another career and launched Chafford Hundred two years ago. There was clearly a need for a marketing club for top athletes. Athletes needed to meet and mix with business people to understand the real world of commerce and industry. Fatima explained the objectives of the club which are:

- to develop the grass-roots level of young athletes
- to provide young athletes with the opportunity of meeting business people (especially



- companies like Acorn who have direct contact with youngsters and are at the forefront of the Computer Age therefore coupling together knowledge with experience achieving excellence in education' – Fatima's words, not mine)
- to provide a marketing vehicle for existing athletes and open their eyes to the business world.

The excitement created at the show over the 'Quest for Gold' competition pleased her as she,

with her colleagues Linford Christie, Colin Jackson and Steve Backley, had played a significant role in ensuring the game was both exciting to play and educational. Was she a champion at Quest for Gold? – she thought that Colin or Steve were probably better.

Since the association of Chafford Hundred with Acorn all the athletes working closely with Acorn have taken a greater interest in computers, especially the world beaters: Acorn Computers. ■

Suzi stars on Radio Cambridge

It seems there's never a dull moment in our Youth Trainee, Suzi Rudd's diary. Since joining us in March this year she's been interviewed for Radio Cambridge, featured in a Cambs Tech publication, and photographed with famous sporting personalities. Whatever next?

Before joining Acorn, Suzi spent time in a small village firm gaining work experience. After that, she decided she'd like to work with accounts, and, in our Finance department, she's getting a taste of everything.

I'm assessed regularly', explains Suzi, 'and if there's anything I need to do that I can't do here, I go to college for half a day or so. I'm really impressed with how relaxed and friendly



people at Acorn are. It's the first thing I noticed about the company.

I'm attending word processing and typing evening courses at my old school. I'd like to work for Acorn when my training period finishes – ideally in the accounts department. Although once I've got my typing and word processing qualifications I may be able to apply for a secretarial position – that's something I'm interested in too.' ■

Making space for safety!

As you may know, there are some new EEC Directives covering the use of VDUs and other health and safety issues. These new Directives are to be implemented in the New Year, and we have already appointed a new group, with representatives from each division, to deal with these important issues.

Broadly the Directives set down regulations for office workspaces with particular reference to those involving VDUs. They also cover any operations that could lead to an accident, such as lifting and carrying heavy loads.

To help us meet the criteria, we have appointed Occusafe who are Health and Safety consultants. They will be assessing all our display screen equipment, keyboards, chairs, desks, etc., to make sure they comply with the regulations.

In the meantime, we are

putting together a training course. The aim will be to train managers and for the information to 'cascade' down throughout the company. Courses are expected to begin early next year.

We will also be producing a health and safety handbook, and there will be a health and safety noticeboard too. Anyone who is a significant user of a display screen will be offered an eye test to determine whether or not they need glasses for VDU work.

For further information, speak to your Health and Safety Group representative: Tilly Storr, Sales and Marketing; John Wilkins, Technical; Barry Carter, Manufacturing; John Marshall, Finance; Denise Cook, Facilities; David Mackay, Office of the Managing Director; Lorraine Buckman, Personnel and Project Leader; Ken Parris, Personnel and Chairman. ■

Acorn's answer to Kate Adie!

As some of you will know, Melanie McLeod left Acorn recently to join her husband Charles who is working with the UN in Yugoslavia. Before she left, Mel agreed to be Acorn's answer to Kate Adie and give us her impressions of life in one of the world's 'hot spots'. We have recently received the first in what I hope will be a series of letters from Mel, so what follows is from 'Our Correspondent in Zagreb'...



Dear Acorn,
I write this sitting at the back of an elegant coffee shop, watching the well-heeled European clientele as they chat in hazy-a-dozen languages, and looking out over a windswept but sunny square in central Budapest.
The contrast between this and my world on the twelfth floor of the tallest building in Zagreb is obvious! There, tucked into a couple of corners, are the offices of the World Health Organisation.
They may provide the health, but so far I have provided the organisation! They still don't have any files but I have provided the documents into a logical system, wrapped in paper or one of the window ladders. And the ir-trages were improvised out of Xerox box lids.
So what am I doing in a coffee shop in Budapest? Well, after only a week in Zagreb, Charles decided to take me on a 16-day holiday to Budapest, Prague and Vienna, just to relax a bit!
Well, I hope that this has whetted your appetites about what is really going on. In the meantime I wish you all, and have nearly got myself an e-mail box!
Yours, Mel

Chez Hotel Volga
Budapest
20 November 1992

Congratulations!

A number of Acorn staff have achieved notable academic successes this year. These include:

GRAHAM BISS and IAN NICHOLAS are working towards the Open University Professional Certificate in Management and have both recently passed the first part of their qualification - 'The Effective Manager'. They are now working on 'Accounting and the PC for Managers' and will be examined in May next year. If they are successful, they will move on to the next and final module, 'Managing Customer and Client Relations'.

TOM ROCHFORD has passed his ONC in Electronic Engineering. The one-year course was organised by the National Extension College and consisted of distance learning supported by tutorials at Anglia Poly.

BRUCE TROTTER now has an MBA (Masters in Business Administration). His course has consisted of day release, evening classes and residential weekends and started in autumn 1990.

BARRY CARTER is working towards an MSc in Manufacturing Management and has just attained a postgraduate diploma in Manufacturing through the Open University. Barry started his OU studies in May 1989 and hopes to have his Masters by September 1993.

ANDY SMITH is working towards a degree in Information Technology through the Open University. Andy has taken his final exams with the results due in late December. ■

Acorn launches Authorised Education Dealer status

To ensure that educational customers have qualified, competent dealers looking after their interests, Acorn has launched a new Authorised Dealer scheme. To qualify for Authorised status,

dealers have to comply with set criteria. By the end of the year, we expect to have appointed 50 or 60 Authorised Education Dealers. ■

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Which event would you like to help with? Check with your manager first, then contact Liz Clifford on 4229.

Consumer

13-18 December
Seriously Bad Tour (Consumer Roadshow around the UK visiting shopping centres in a 40ft trailer kitted out with Acorn computers)

19-21 February
International Computer Show, Wembley

18 March-12 April
Ideal Home Exhibition, Earls Court

4-6 April
European Computer Trade Show, Business Design Centre, London

Special Needs

7-8 January
CCTA-ET93 (Special Needs), London School of Economics
20-23 January
BETT - Micros for Special Needs, London

New names, new faces

Sales and Marketing Division
Richard Percy - Sales and Marketing Manager, Consumer
Richard Ramirez - International Account Manager
Matthew Bailey - Telesales Clerk
Tanya Gilbert - Secretary to Terry Shurwood

Technical Division
Zoe Smith - Secretary, Support Services

Jenny Seymour - Customer Services Assistant
Fabio Balloni - Industrial Placement Student, Software Skills

Manufacturing and Operations Division
Paul Bennett - Storesman
John Barker - Purchasing/Production Controller

**Merry
Christmas**



Contributions to
'Comment' via E-mail

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